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TO

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Attention: Hon. Lou Hyndman  
Minister of Education

FROM

ALBERTA FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

BRIEF ON

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AND APATHY

October 30, 1972



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## CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AND APATHY

A whole generation of parents with children now in the School System have not been taught their role and function in our Society, i.e.:

The Democratic system its strengths and weaknesses  
Functions of Universal Education  
The Democratic Society, what it is and what it means  
Importance of, and Reasons for, intelligent citizen participation in our Community.

Many teachers have no real understanding of Canadian democratic dynamics themselves. Some of this is due to foreign education, foreign citizenship loyalties or to a lack in the Canadian educational system itself. They frequently teach by word or by attitude that Government is not for, but exploiting people and politicians are involved for personal gain only. The implication being that no sane respectable person would become involved in anything so nasty. Consequently these students become alienated to our system of Government. They develop a "WHAT'S THE USE" or "LEAVE IT TO THE PROFESSIONAL" attitude, and have little or no sense of Canadian identity.

When faced with a serious problem and uninformed of the readily available resources and solutions, people frequently take one of two courses:

- 1) Become angry, frustrated, demand change in the system and begin to act outside it, i.e. : "RADICAL YOUTH MOVEMENTS".

or more maturely

- 2) Refuse to admit a problem exists or, if they admit one does exist, deny that they have any responsibility in the matter and thus avoid the ego damage of admitting that they are ignorant and unable to act on matters of grave concern and importance to them .....APATHY?

People become apathetic toward a situation which is not their liking, but which they believe is totally beyond their control.

This attitude is often fostered by bureaucrats (both minor and of some importance) who reinforce the idea that Government is the MASTER of the people and not the PUBLIC'S SERVANT. e.g.

Public business without adequate public information  
Public business conducted privately  
Public business conducted in a manner that is not in the best interests of the public  
Public regulations made in the interests of a more efficiently functioning bureaucracy rather than for their effectiveness in meeting the needs of the public and the individual member thereof.

With few exceptions, a whole generation of parents does not know how to function or participate as citizens in our Canadian Democratic Society!





### The Facts

Number one, this is a parliamentary democracy and many of those involved in politics wish it to remain so.

Number two, the public has been led to believe that it in fact is, or should be a democracy.

Number three, many do not know how our democracy functions nor do they understand their role as citizens and have therefore "Opted Out".

### The Solution

The role and function of citizen participation must be taught in a factual manner that is demonstrably successful.

### Methods

Grants to organizations prepared to reach groups of people and able to articulate the roles and responsibilities of citizens and to elicit their enthusiasm in assuming these roles.

Government services of this nature are presently available to disadvantaged and native people in various communities throughout our Province. Perhaps we need to realize that due to some lack of past communication, a very large percentage of our total population falls into the disadvantaged bracket when it comes to understanding Government and Citizen Participation in our Canadian Parliamentary Democracy right here in our own Province of Alberta.

If "the strength of a democracy lies in an informed citizenry" is it not also true that one of our major weaknesses lies in the lack of informed participation and involvement by our average citizen in our Province today?

The Facts

Number one, this is a parliamentary democracy and many of those involved in politics wish it to remain so.  
Number two, the public has been led to believe that it is their duty, or should be a democracy.  
Number three, many do not know how our democracy functions nor do they understand their role as citizens and have therefore "opted out".

The Solution

The role and function of citizen participation must be taught in a factual manner that is democratically successful.

Methods

Grants to organizations prepared to teach groups of people and able to articulate the roles and responsibilities of citizens and to assist their enthusiasm in assuming these roles.  
Government services of this nature are presently available to disadvantaged and native people in various communities throughout our Province. Perhaps we need to realize that due to some lack of past communication, a very large percentage of our total population falls into the disadvantaged bracket when it comes to understanding Government and Citizen Participation in our Canadian Parliamentary Democracy right here in our own Province of Alberta.  
If the message of a democracy lies in an informed citizenry, it is not also true that one of our major weaknesses lies in the lack of informed participation and involvement by our average citizen in our Province today?







